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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Allan BREIER-CASTRO (Venezuela)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 22 September 1995, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fiftieth session the item entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 2nd and 16th to 18th meetings, on 4 October and 6, 7 and 9 November (see A/C.4/50/SR.2 and 16-18). The general debate on the item took place at the 16th to 18th meetings, on 6, 7 and 9 November.

3. The Fourth Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/50/384).

4. At its 2nd meeting, on 4 October, the Fourth Committee decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of

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1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20).

Outer Space of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), to be chaired by the delegation of Austria, to prepare the draft resolution on the item.

5. At the 16th meeting, on 6 November, the Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) made an introductory statement on the item (see A/C.4/50/SR.16).

6. At the same meeting, the Chairman of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space introduced the report of the Committee. 1/

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION A/C.4/50/L.9

7. At the 18th meeting, on 9 November, the representative of Austria, on behalf of the Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), introduced a draft resolution entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" (A/C.4/50/L.9).

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.4/50/L.9 (see para. 9 below). 2/

III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

9. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 49/34 of 9 December 1994,

Deeply convinced of the common interest of mankind in promoting the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived therefrom, and also of the importance of international cooperation in this field, for which the United Nations should continue to provide a focal point,

Reaffirming the importance of international cooperation in developing the rule of law, including the relevant norms of space law and their important role in international cooperation for the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

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2/ The representative of Japan made a statement in explanation of his Government's position.

Concerned about the possibility of an arms race in outer space,

Recognizing that all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, should contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes,

Considering that space debris is an issue of concern to all nations,

Noting the progress achieved in the further development of peaceful space exploration and application as well as in various national and cooperative space projects, which contribute to international cooperation, and the importance of further international cooperation in this field,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General 3/ on the implementation of recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, 4/

Having considered the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on the work of its thirty-eighth session, 5/

1. Endorses the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

2. Invites States that have not yet become parties to the international treaties governing the uses of outer space 6/ to give consideration to ratifying or acceding to those treaties;

3. Notes that, at its thirty-fourth session, the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in its working groups,

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3/ A/50/384.

4/ See Report of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Vienna, 9-21 August 1982, and corrigenda (A/CONF.101/10 and Corr.1 and 2).

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20).

6/ Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 2222 (XXI), annex); Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 2345 (XXII), annex); Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (resolution 2777 (XXVI), annex); Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (resolution 3235 (XXIX), annex); Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (resolution 34/68, annex).

continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/34; 7/

4. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its thirty-fifth session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, particularly those of developing countries, should:

(a) Continue its consideration of the question of review and possible revision of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space; 8/

(b) Continue, through its working group, its consideration of matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union;

(c) Continue, through its working group, its consideration of the legal aspects related to the application of the principle that the exploration and utilization of outer space should be carried out for the benefit and in the interests of all States, taking into particular account the needs of developing countries;

5. Also endorses the recommendation of the Committee that the Legal Subcommittee, at its thirty-fifth session, should suspend consideration in its working group of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space pending the results of the work in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, without prejudice to the possibility of reconvening its working group on that item if in the opinion of the Legal Subcommittee sufficient progress was made in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its session in 1996 to warrant the reconvening of the working group;

6. Notes that deliberations on the question of the geostationary orbit have been undertaken by the Legal Subcommittee as reflected in its report, 7/ on the basis of recent proposals which might provide a new and enhanced basis for future work;

7. Endorses the recommendations and agreements concerning the organization of work in the Legal Subcommittee;

8. Notes that, in accordance with its recommendation, the Chairman of the Legal Subcommittee, at its thirty-fourth session, conducted extensive, open-ended informal consultations with all members of the Subcommittee on the working methods and agenda of the Legal Subcommittee, including the consideration of possible additional items for inclusion in the agenda as outlined in the report

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7/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20), sect. II.C.

8/ See resolution 47/68.

of the Committee, 9/ and also notes that, in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee, a Working Group of the Whole was established at its thirty-eighth session to examine the working methods of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, which took particular account of the results of the informal consultations of the Chairman of the Legal Subcommittee;

9. Endorses the recommendations of the Committee as contained in the report of its thirty-eighth session with regard to its working methods and to the reconvening of the Working Group of the Whole at the thirty-ninth session of the Committee; 9/

10. Notes that, in accordance with the recommendation contained in resolutions 48/222 B of 23 December 1993 and 49/221 B of 23 December 1994, the Committee reviewed its needs for written records;

11. Endorses the recommendation of the Committee that, beginning with its thirty-ninth session, the Committee would be provided with unedited transcripts of its session in lieu of verbatim records, as described in the Secretariat report on this matter; 10/

12. Requests the Legal Subcommittee to review, at its thirty-fifth session, its requirement for summary records with a view to determining whether it may be possible to utilize unedited transcripts at its subsequent sessions and to consider under what circumstances there might be a need to revert to summary records should a decision be taken to utilize unedited transcripts;

13. Notes that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, at its thirty-second session, continued its work as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/34; 11/

14. Welcomes the decision of the Committee to consider the matter of space debris as a matter of priority on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

15. Notes that under that item the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee continued to consider scientific research relating to space debris, including relevant studies, mathematical modelling and other analytical work on the characterization of the space debris environment;

16. Agrees with the endorsement by the Committee of the multi-year plan for consideration of the agenda item on space debris approved by the Scientific

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9/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20), sect. II.E.3.

10/ A/AC.105/L.207.

11/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 20 (A/50/20), sect. II.B.

and Technical Subcommittee at its thirty-second session, 12/ and also agrees that the work plan should be implemented with flexibility;

17. Also endorses the recommendations of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-third session, taking into account the concerns of all countries, particularly those of developing countries, should:

(a) Consider the following items on a priority basis:

(i) United Nations Programme on Space Applications and the coordination of space activities within the United Nations system;

(ii) Implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space; 4/

(iii) Matters relating to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, including, inter alia, applications for developing countries;

(iv) Use of nuclear power sources in outer space;

(v) Space debris;

(b) Consider the following items:

(i) Questions relating to space transportation systems and their implications for future activities in space;

(ii) Examination of the physical nature and technical attributes of the geostationary orbit and of its utilization and applications, including, inter alia, in the field of space communications, as well as other questions relating to space communications developments, taking particular account of the needs and interests of developing countries;

(iii) Matters relating to life sciences, including space medicine;

(iv) Progress in national and international space activities related to the Earth's environment, in particular progress in the geosphere-biosphere (global change) programme;

(v) Matters relating to planetary exploration;

(vi) Matters relating to astronomy;

(vii) The theme fixed for special attention at the 1996 session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee: "Utilization of micro- and small satellites for the expansion of low-cost space activities, taking into account the special needs of developing countries"; the Committee on Space Research and the International Astronautical

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12/ A/AC.105/605, para. 83.

Federation, in liaison with Member States, should be invited to arrange a symposium, with as wide a participation as possible, to be held during the first week of the Subcommittee's session, to complement discussions within the Subcommittee on the special theme;

18. Considers, in the context of paragraph 17 (a) (ii) above, that it is particularly urgent to implement the following recommendations:

(a) All countries should have the opportunity to use the techniques resulting from medical studies in space;

(b) Data banks at the national and regional levels should be strengthened and expanded and an international space information service should be established to function as a centre of coordination;

(c) The United Nations should support the creation of adequate training centres at the regional level, linked, whenever possible, to institutions implementing space programmes; necessary funding for the development of such centres should be made available through financial institutions;

(d) The United Nations should organize a fellowship programme through which selected graduates or postgraduates from developing countries should get in-depth, long-term exposure to space technology or applications; it is also desirable to encourage the availability of opportunities for such exposure on other bilateral or multilateral bases outside the United Nations system;

19. Endorses the recommendation of the Committee that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee should reconvene, at its thirty-third session, the Working Group of the Whole to Evaluate the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, to continue its work;

20. Also endorses the recommendations of the Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, as endorsed by the Committee and as contained in the report of the Working Group of the Whole; 13/

21. Decides that, during the thirty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space should be reconvened, and invites Member States to report to the Secretary-General on a regular basis with regard to national and international research concerning the safety of nuclear-powered satellites;

22. Endorses the United Nations Programme on Space Applications for 1996, as proposed to the Committee by the Expert on Space Applications; 14/

13/ A/AC.105/605, annex II.

14/ A/AC.105/595, sect. I.

23. Emphasizes the urgency and importance of implementing fully the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

24. Reaffirms its approval of the recommendation of the Conference regarding the establishment and strengthening of regional mechanisms of cooperation and their promotion and creation through the United Nations system;

25. Expresses its appreciation to all Governments that have made, or expressed their intention to make, contributions towards carrying out the recommendations of the Conference;

26. Invites all Governments to take effective action for the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference;

27. Requests all organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations working in the field of outer space or on space-related matters to cooperate in the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference;

28. Invites the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference;

29. Notes with satisfaction that, in the context of paragraph 18 (c) above, significant progress has been achieved in establishing regional centres for space science and technology education in each region covered by the regional commissions;

30. Endorses the recommendation of the Committee that these centres be established on the basis of affiliation to the United Nations as early as possible and that such affiliation would provide the centres with the necessary recognition and would strengthen the possibilities of attracting donors and of establishing academic relationships with national and international space-related institutions;

31. Notes that, pursuant to its request in paragraph 27 of resolution 49/34, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-second session, continued its discussions on the possibility of holding a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and that the Committee continued these discussions at its thirty-eighth session with a view to promoting an early conclusion on the matter by the Committee;

32. Agrees that a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space could be convened before the turn of the present century, and that, prior to recommending a date for the conference, there should be a consensus recommendation on the agenda, venue and funding of the conference;

33. Recommends that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, at its thirty-third session, continue the work it had conducted at its thirty-second session, taking into particular account the report of its Working Group of the

Whole, 13/ with the aim being to complete the development and refinement of a framework that would allow an evaluation of proposals by the Committee at its thirty-ninth session, and that this framework should allow for the consideration of all possibilities of achieving the final objectives of such a conference;

34. Agrees that, on the basis of the work to be conducted at the thirty-third session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, the Committee, at its thirty-ninth session, should consider all issues related to the possible convening of a third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, including its technical and political objectives, a detailed and sharply focused agenda, funding, timing and other organizational aspects as well as whether the objectives of the conference could be achieved by other means, with a view to making a final recommendation to the General Assembly at that session of the Committee;

35. Notes with interest the plans of the Government of Uruguay to host the Third Space Conference of the Americas at Punta del Este in 1996;

36. Recommends that more attention be paid to all aspects related to the protection and the preservation of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment;

37. Considers that it is essential that Member States pay more attention to the problem of collisions of space objects, including nuclear power sources, with space debris, and other aspects of space debris, calls for the continuation of national research on this question, for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris and for the compilation and dissemination of data on space debris, and also considers that, to the extent possible, information thereon should be provided to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee;

38. Urges all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space as an essential condition for the promotion of international cooperation in the exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes;

39. Emphasizes the need to increase the benefits of space technology and its applications and to contribute to an orderly growth of space activities favourable to the socio-economic advancement of humanity, in particular that of the people of the developing countries;

40. Takes note of the views expressed during the thirty-eighth session of the Committee and during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly concerning ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes;

41. Requests the Committee to continue to consider, as a matter of priority, ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session;

42. Also requests the Committee to continue to consider at its thirty-ninth session its agenda item entitled "Spin-off benefits of space technology: review of current status";

43. Requests the specialized agencies and other international organizations to continue and, where appropriate, enhance their cooperation with the Committee and to provide it with progress reports on their work relating to the peaceful uses of outer space;

44. Requests the Committee to continue its work, in accordance with the present resolution, to consider, as appropriate, new projects in outer space activities and to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, including its views on which subjects should be studied in the future.